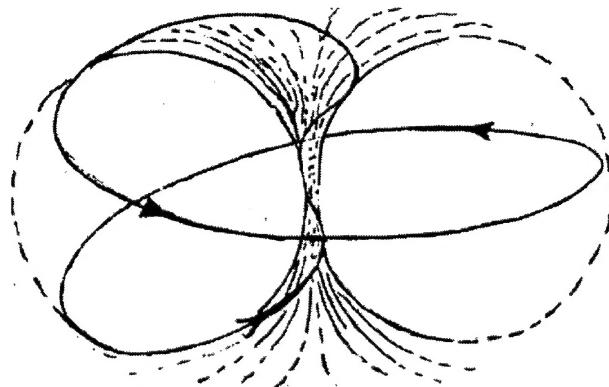


EXIT, PURSUED BY THE ALGORITHM...



My brain tends to canonize the first version of something I encounter. This is an autistic trait called "gestalt cognitive processing." Sometimes we lock on to an initial experience and it shapes our expectations of what will follow.

This runs deep in my programming and takes a lot of conscious effort to rewire.

Most of the time I don't bother. Usually this is ~~harmless~~ and sometimes funny. For example: Ringo Starr will always be the Mock Turtle to me (from Alice in Wonderland, 1985.)

My brain refuses to re-file Ringo under the Beatles the way most brains would. He is forever filed as: Mock Turtle, Conductor (from Shining Time Station), then - almost as an afterthought: drummer for the Beatles.

I like this about my brain. I notice and form connections most people don't. And I

hold on to my first impression when others often don't. But it does make it difficult to notice & process incremental change.

Over the last year I've realized that this is why I keep trying to "surf the web" like it's the 90's. But that is ~~xxxxxx~~ over a decade away and things change.

This is where I can get in trouble.

I'm not oblivious to change. I've noticed changing platforms with the rest of us. Livejournal to Wordpress to Substack. Flickr to Facebook to Instagram. But I've struggled to integrate when the vibe shifted.

This space that used to operate on a gift economy has been hijacked by capitalists who see our ~~us~~ online communities as another resource to extract value from. First with adverts, then selling our data, now as fodder to train AI.

Alongside this shift they devised an algorithm to capture our attention for as long as possible. To do this it promotes controversy & the most reactionary & outrage inducing posts get the most traction.

The social internet is now a toxic firehose amplifying despair, rage & fear of the human race. I am more acutely aware of the problems in the world, but less equipped to do anything about them. My energy is tied up in processing humanity's collective anxiety, grief & trauma.

My first step was deleting Facebook. But soon IG was using a reactionary algorithm as well. Then, I believed Substack was my escape hatch.

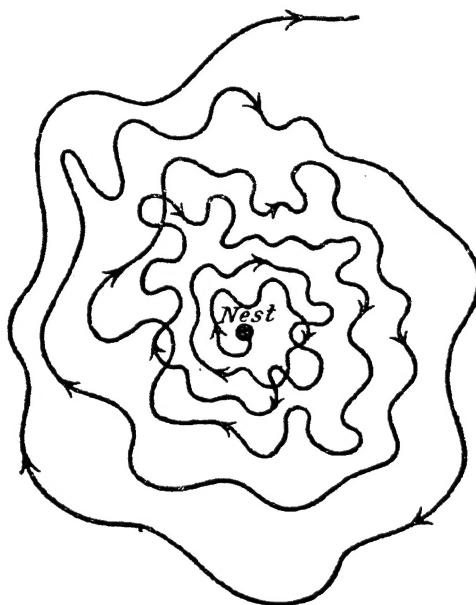
But the algorithm pursued.

When I joined Substack it was a slow paced & intentional platform for long form writing. There wasn't even an app.

When Substack introduced Notes I felt like I was on a crashing plane looking for the exits.

Since that time I've done a lot of deep reading on the early Internet and algorithmic feeds. This has helped me make sense of why & how the vibes shifted so dramatically. And devise a plan to protect my energy.

I suppose I've finally integrated the knowledge that the Internet of today is not the same as the Internet of 1999.



After working through my denial - and perhaps all the stages of grief - I've finally reached acceptance.

This November I logged out of Instagram for good. Now I'm leaving Substack. I'm done with algorithmic walled gardens & their dumpster fires. I'm setting off into the wilderness of the open web.

What would I make if I weren't dancing for the algorithm? This zine for a start. Let's see what comes next.

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